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Before the Higher Education Committee

*In Support of **SB 936: An Act Concerning Workforce Development** with additions*

Good morning Senator Slap, Representative Haddad, and members of the Committee, my name is Marva Taylor and I'm a Nurse Clinical Instructor at Connecticut Valley Hospital. I've worked as a Nurse at CVH for 20 years.

Currently, CVH is so short staffed on nurses that the hospital had to modify it's nursing ratios. We need to do everything we can to increase the number of nurses coming through nursing programs into State facilities where we take care of the most vulnerable.

In the past, we made sure to have 1 RN to 23 patients. Now, we operate with 1 RN for anywhere between 46-69 patients, because often an RN will have to run 2 units instead of 1 unit. This has a serious impact on the patients, because it means they have to wait for a nurse to become available. We take care of very acute patients struggling with a variety of severe mental health disorders. When patients have to wait for assessments, meds, or any type of care, this increases acuity and leads to violent behaviors on the units. This creates an increasingly dangerous environment for the other patients on the unit, and for the staff.

We need to do a better job of connecting new nurses to State facilities and to the care we provide. New nurses need to experience a variety of care environments, and often our services are in the shadows because we take care of the most vulnerable. Creating clinical placements and internship programs with state facilities in collaboration with state colleges will help recruit new nurses.

We also need to fund preceptor programs to give more nurses support on the job. This is hard work, and we need to make nursing more attractive by supporting nurses. Supporting nurses also means we need to pay nurses more, offer sign on bonuses, and ensure that public sector nursing is valued comparatively to private sector nurse compensation.

All of these steps reflect a comprehensive recruitment and retention strategy to support nurses who are taking care of the most vulnerable clients in CT. Thank you for your time.